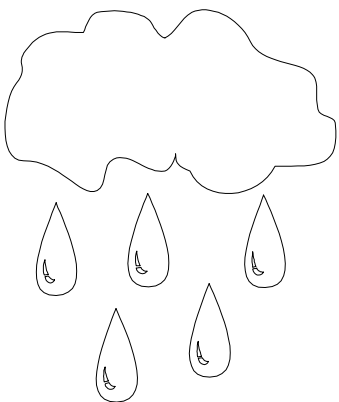




Backgrounder — Floods and Flash Floods

Emergency Information

Flood waters can be extremely dangerous. The force of 6 inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. The best protection during a flood is to leave the area and go to shelter on higher ground.



Flash flood waters move very fast and can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings and obliterate bridges. Walls of water can reach heights of 10 to 20 feet and generally are accompanied by a deadly cargo of debris. The best response to any sign of flash flooding is to move immediately and quickly to higher ground.

Cars can easily be swept away in just 2 feet of moving water. If flood waters rise around a car, it should be abandoned. Passengers should climb to higher ground.

Danger Zones

Floods and flash floods occur within all 50 states. Communities particularly at risk are those located in low-lying areas, near water or downstream from a dam.

What is a Flood?

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters except fire. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding after spring rains, heavy thunderstorms or winter snow thaws. Floods can be slow or fast rising, but generally they develop over a period of days.

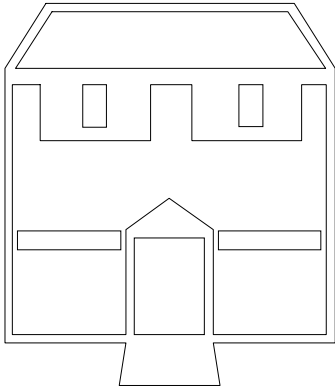
Dam failures are potentially the worst flood events. Dams can fail through neglect, poor design or structural damage from a major event, like an earthquake. When a dam fails, an immense quantity of water suddenly rushes downstream, destroying all in its path.

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What is a Flash Flood?

Flash floods usually result from intense storms dropping large amounts of rain within a brief period. Flash floods occur with little or no warning and can reach full peak in only a few minutes.



Help Your Community Get Ready

News media can raise awareness about floods and flash floods by providing important information to the community by:

- Publishing a special section in your newspaper with emergency information on floods and flash floods. Localize the information by printing the phone numbers of local emergency services offices, the American Red Cross and hospitals.
- Interviewing local officials about land use management and building codes in floodplains.
- Working with local emergency services and American Red Cross officials to prepare special reports for people with mobility impairments on what to do in case of an evacuation.
- Periodically informing your community of local public warning systems.

Did You Know...

- Individuals and business owners can protect themselves from flood losses by purchasing flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program. Homeowner's policies do not cover flood damage. Information is available through local insurance agents and emergency management offices.
- Flooding has caused the deaths of more than 10,000 people since 1900. Property damage from flooding now totals over \$1 billion each year in the United States.
- More than 2,200 lives were lost as a result of the Johnstown, Pennsylvania flood of 1889. This flood was caused by an upstream dam failure.
- Nearly 9 of every 10 presidential disaster declarations result from situations in which flooding was a major component.
- On July 31, 1976, the Big Thompson River near Denver overflowed after an extremely heavy storm. A wall of water 19 feet high roared down the Big Thompson Canyon where many people were camping. One hundred and forty people perished and millions of dollars of property were lost.